

102) rushdie

March 27, 1989  
Monday

Starting Rushdie's Satanic Verses last night, I reflected:  
Rushdie is, right now and perhaps for the rest of his life, in a state of freedom: "another word for nothing left to lose." He is under an irrevocable sentence of death; he is living on death row. Or rather: he is underground; but his likelihood of getting away with this for a long time does not seem much better than that of someone with AIDS.

He has committed heresy, in fact blasphemy, in a way from which there is no return for him--to an Islamic community sensitive to the condemnation of powerful fundamentalist sections.

In his words, What kind of idea is his? Is he? The kind that calculates, compromises? Too late for that! (He tried being conciliatory, to the limits of dignity: without recanting). Or the kind that stands like a rock, that won't budge, won't give in or go away...the kind that can change the world?

He is guaranteed an unprecedented global audience--like the first astronauts on the moon, while they were there. He cannot be censored, he will be heard. Should he not (he has nothing further to fear, nothing more to lose! he is subject to no authority) say exactly what he thinks, as clearly, bluntly, as it can be said? With the candor and the emotional impact of a suicide note, a deathbed "confession" (or curse).

Why should I not do just that? Should I not have put behind me the temptations to appear respectable to former colleagues and their current bosses? Too late for that! And it was too late 18 years ago! (Maybe I could have managed my relations with the Establishment differently even after the Pentagon Papers, but I had reasons for not doing that; anyway, I didn't. Nor did I use a notoriety and audience not unlike that of Rushdie's (!) to maximum use after the war ended; anyway, that moment too has passed.

What is left is that I have a reputation for telling the truth, an audience that is not small, and, in some ways like Rushdie, nothing left to lose. (Is that true? Ironically, for the first time since the PP, I am invited into an academic community for research, at Harvard yet! and decorum could pay off, in the short run, more than in years past. Yet not really



for long, I suspect, nor in a deep way; bold truth-telling would not abolish chances of acceptance that are small at best.)

The point is to draw inspiration from what I hope Rushdie will do, what it seems to me he should do: to measure my own opportunities and efforts by the same standards.

iget:  
Howard  
Cameron:  
School...

Thomas Paine wrote the first of his series of pamphlets, The

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American Crisis, "on a drumhead by the flickering light of a campfire during Washington's retreat before greatly superior forces, with its ringing opening sentence: "These are the times that try men's souls.'" (The Essential Thomas Paine, p. ix; I first read this while I waited to make a speech accepting the Thomas Paine award of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee in December 1971, the month my indictment was enlarged to 12 counts, 115 years. When I spoke to my father while I waited, I mentioned that I was reading Paine, with astonishment at his timeliness, and he proceeded to tell me the following episode, which I had just read on page x, quoting Paine almost verbatim. My father was 82 at the time, and Paine had become a hero for him when he was 14: the son of Russian immigrants, in public school in Denver).

When Paine opposed the terrorism of the French revolution--the cause for which he had written the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen--he was arrested and jailed on orders of Robespierre. He escaped the guillotine only because his cell was improperly marked. "It was during the days immediately preceding his arrest, when Paine was convinced that he would be sacrificed on the bloody altars of the Jacobins, that he composed the first part of The Age of Reason...an impassioned plea for Deism and the religion of reason, and a criticism of the literal reading of the Old and the New Testament, a criticism which grounded orthodoxy in primitive superstition and sublimated violence and lust." (see Rushdie!)

opposed ally of  
(like method  
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SR)

In a letter to Samuel Adams in 1803 he described the circumstances of his work on this book:

"My friends were falling as fast as the guillotine could cut their heads off, and I every day expected the same fate...I appeared to myself to be on the death-bed, for death was on every side of me, and I had no time to lose."

In the present World Crisis...that is the sense that should pace one's efforts and set standards for candor and honesty.

And after reading The Great Cosmic Mother, I recognize that the Supreme Power (in which Paine--denounced by Theodore Roosevelt as "a filthy little atheist"--believed) cannot be male, cannot be a male god separate from the earth. To see that is Common Sense, needed desperately for these times.

For we will not long survive the continued desacralization



of the Earth and all its constituents and inhabitants--the refusal to worship and adore the miracle of life and what makes it possible. Yet the Earth was seen as feminine long before God was seen as male; and when God became single and male, to worship the Earth was seen both as blasphemy and as unmasculine, manliness requiring contempt for and domination and exploitation of both the earth and human women.

also: Violence = male = right.

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Hyph. What is at stake is ~~divine~~, ~~national~~ of institutionalized male ~~domination~~ violence, symbolized + institutionalized by male domination. To attack <sup>(arguably)</sup> male God (male ~~domination~~) is to challenge <sup>+ recommended, for men, broadly</sup> ~~Sanctity~~ (Prophecy) is to challenge all that. (Rushdie; Paine; <sup>is attacking</sup> <sup>(male) violence</sup> <sup>is attacking</sup> <sup>hierarchy</sup> <sup>US domination</sup> <sup>hierarchy</sup> <sup>in attacking</sup> <sup>was unjustified</sup> <sup>I was</sup> <sup>challenging</sup> <sup>(societies)</sup> <sup>US domination</sup> <sup>as justifying</sup> <sup>violence</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>attacking</sup> <sup>US Pres</sup> <sup>(truthfulness)</sup> <sup>governors</sup> <sup>= God</sup> <sup>Male Pres</sup> <sup>as God</sup> <sup>king</sup> <sup>(I was</sup> <sup>criticizing)</sup> <sup>a violent</sup> <sup>lawless (rule)</sup> <sup>rule</sup> <sup>questioning</sup> <sup>his right</sup> <sup>God-hierarchy</sup> <sup>his claim on Godhead</sup> <sup>SUN-GOD</sup>

Our attitude toward the Earth and all life will not change unless and till our attitude toward the human female changes: which is called for in any case to right the broadest social oppression existing in the world over the last 5000 years; today & perhaps more than ever, with the feminization of poverty, hunger, and slave-like labor worldwide, and of victimization in wartime.

This is even at the heart of the fundamentalist attack on Rushdie. The content of the verses which "Mahound" comes to repudiate as the inspiration of Satan accords a spiritual status to female gods, "daughters" of Allah: a compromise that is then extirpated from the new patriarchal, warlike religion, by "Mahound" (who just might be Satan, or Satanically inspired, as the name suggests: it later became a name for the devil, applied by Muhammad's foreign critics.) (According to the Britannica, Islam replaced matrilinearity, and polyandry, with strict patrilinearity and polygamy or monogamy, with women being allowed only one husband, to make paternity unequivocal).

Paine, too, despite a religious belief shared by Jefferson, Franklin and the Adamses, found that the Age of Reason cost him his popularity "in the only country he adopted as his own." "Paine had underestimated the hold that institutional religion had on the belief and behavior of the American people even though religion was not a part of the legal establishment as it was in England. His experience in America was to teach him that religious intolerance does not disappear merely because religion is disestablished. Although he loved America, he did not understand her very well and overlooked the fact that for most of his countrymen religious tolerance at that time did not flow from conviction--as was the case for Jefferson and his circle--but from the plurality of religious sects, no one of which was strong enough to crush the others." (xi). (Introduction by Sidney Hook, N.Y. 1969). (See the Bush campaign of 1988, with his pleas for school prayer along with the Pledge of Allegiance, and attacks on the ACLU).

As Diane Johnstone points out in ITT (March 15-21, 1989) the attack on Rushdie began among Pakistani Moslems, Pakistan being "where US money poured in for years to support the late Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq's dictatorship as it restored Islamic law and plotted to turn Afghanistan into a platform for destabilizing the Moslem world south of the Soviet Union by arming Islamic fundamentalists against communism."

Johnstone suggests that human rights and the Enlightenment



"liberation of words from religion" have to be justified to the masses, with the promise of social betterment. "Writers ...consider that their interest is the interest of all humanity and they are right. But politically, humanity has to be convinced that this is so."

"While claiming the Enlightenment and human rights as its identity, the West as often betrayed their promise. Countless

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enthusiasts for Western enlightenment in non-Western societies, anxious to free their societies from the dead weight of authoritarian tradition, have been defeated by retrograde authoritarian elites in alliance with Western powers.

"The power of Western states has repeatedly been used to crush the relatively enlightened or Westernized political currents in the Third World, precisely because such currents tend to be perceived as rivals for power. Iran provides the most striking example. In 1953, in one of its proudest achievements, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh when he started to nationalize the oil industry. Thereafter the US helped the Shah suppress all progressive opposition, so that all that was left was Islamic fundamentalism. That was considered relatively o.k., because it was "anti-communist."

"Today the champagne corks are once again popping in Langley, Va., as the last Afghan Westernizers are surrounded in the cities by US-armed rural obscurantists determined to prevent women from learning how to read.

"In Libya, Islamic fundamentalists opposed Muammar Khadafy for his liberal reforms and emancipation of women. They can no doubt count on the CIA's blessings.

"The past decade has been marked by a worldwide regression from enlightenment to obscurantism. A return to the most authoritarian forms of religious obedience...go hand in hand with the dominance of Reaganism, that is, aggressive free enterprise ideology or what Europeans call "liberalism." What the two have in common is a passive acceptance of the world order as determined by benevolent forces beyond human control: the market and God. Politics, collective action to improve the general condition, is devalued."

Compare McNamara's draft on "Can We End the Cold War? Should We Try?" (1/10/89), where he describes how we got here as follows: "For forty years US foreign policy and defense programs have been shaped largely by one major force [rather, rationale]: fear of, and opposition to, the spread of Soviet-sponsored communism. [as in Iran, Guatemala, Cuba, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Angola, the Persian Gulf, Lebanon, Libya....Note also his description of these "unilateral actions" which his proposed Code of Conduct would have precluded: "Soviet intervention in:...Angola (via the Cubans); Indo-China (via the

added to  
29 March  
on MCN



North Vietnamese); and Korea (via the North Koreans)."]

..."In the immediate post-war years, Americans viewed the world as composed of:...colonial nations in Africa and Asia straining for freedom; developing countries elsewhere struggling to advance; and all endangered by the two great Communist powers--China and the Soviet Union--who we saw as determined to extend their hegemony across the globe.

"In such a world the US viewed itself as: a generous benefactor of the poor; ...the protector of freedom and democracy everywhere; and the defender of all against the Communist threat. Fearing that threat, the US...supplied economic and military assistance to democratic regimes across the globe."

Though McNamara calls for a response now to the opportunity to end the cold war and to return to the Roosevelt's ("and Churchill's"--?) conception of the postwar world, formulated in the Atlantic Charter and later in the concept of the UN, he never criticises the realism (or deliberately constructed ideological nature) of the above views over the last forty years: for much of which, he was an important exponent and executor of cold war policies.

Simply, "By the time the UN was organized, East-West rivalry rendered it impotent. But is it not time to return to Roosevelt's conception...?"

His proposals for the present and future are, on the whole, good. But he admits that they will run into strong skeptical challenges, of which he lists and tries to answer six: all of them reflecting the Cold War ideology he and his predecessors and successors helped to inculcate in the American electorate over the last two generations, with the help of secrecy, lies, interventions pursued as covert actions in support of a secret foreign policy.

Will the objections he anticipates really be adequately stilled, simply on the grounds that "the world and the Soviets have changed," without ever criticizing the honesty and realism of past premises still expressed in these objections, such as the unchangeable hostility and military expansionism of the Soviet Union, and its danger for US security? (i.e. how good were those who he acted on the "goodness" of US: VN, Indonesia, Chile on them?)

In May of 1972, I urged McGeorge Bundy--having already failed to move McNamara to do so--to speak publicly against the mining of Haiphong and the bombing of North Vietnam that was accompanying it. He said that he had already done so; but I ventured to point out to him a limitation on what he had said so far that made his testimony, I suspected, unlikely to sway a current Republican administration. He had failed to acknowledge that the policies he was criticizing had their roots in his own prior Democratic administration.



I did not believe, I told him, that he or his former colleagues could be heard usefully by present officials if his advice took the form: "We were doing it right; the problem is that you guys have kept at it too long, or you've let it get too big, the costs have gotten too great, you're not to be trusted with the strategy we used..."

I had tried, unsuccessfully, to avert an earlier phase of escalation in 1969--likewise reproducing 1964-65--by urging Democrats like Paul Warnke and Harry McPherson (former aide to LBJ) to be willing to say: "Mr. Nixon, this isn't your war. It's our war. We made the mistakes that got us in. Don't make those same mistakes. Get us out."

My point was that no President would get us out who would have to anticipate bearing the whole responsibility for losing the war, and who could expect partisan attack on his Administration for doing that. With a new President who did not yet bear great responsibility for our continued involvement, I hoped, there was a chance of inducing him to cut our losses; but only, I suspected, if the Democrats were willing to share the responsibility, even taking most of it--as they deserved--thus assuring him they would not jump him for doing what needed to be done. If, on the other hand, we held back long enough for the war to become "Nixon's War," I feared, he would have come to feel too personally committed--like LBJ--and too politically vulnerable to pull out, even if the Democrats belatedly purported to be willing to help him.

Warnke and McPherson--both on the Democratic Policy Advisory Committee--declined to take the tack I suggested. Each pointed out that it would have disastrous consequences for the Democratic Party. It was too soon, they said. Warnke said, "We would be blamed for having gotten us in, and if we did what you suggest, we would be blamed as well for losing the war: pulling the rug out--a 'stab in the back.'"

"There would be a bloodbath such as you've never seen," McPherson said, referring to domestic political recriminations, a return of "loss-of-China"-type McCarthyism. "And that means, you and me, Dan."

I was disappointed and dismayed by what I had heard, and I didn't hide it. I responded in a way that ended the phone call and our acquaintance.

"That may be, Harry," I said. "That would be very serious; and we'd have to do what we could to deal with it. But I'm not willing to protect myself from that at the cost of Vietnamese lives, by prolonging the bloodbath that's going on right now."

I remember hanging up the phone with the sinking thought that there were Democrats--high-level ones, with Warnke, at



least, among the best, most liberal and conscientious in the party--who were quite willing, indeed who wanted to see the debacle last long enough to become Nixon's War. "Then," they no doubt told themselves, "we'll help him, if he needs it; then we'll all get out together, without Democrats having to lead the retreat." Self-serving delusion. It would be too late then. The war would go on.

*(Main hypothesis: bill to avoid: shame, occupation  
humiliation, failure  
loss of status, pride...)*

For my own part, I was copying the Pentagon Papers that month. If they could be released in time, through Fulbright's Committee or otherwise, they would allow Nixon to dump the blame for "failure" in Vietnam on the Democrats, and that might encourage him to cut our losses. After a number of frustrating talks with Democrats that month, including these two, I felt less bad about doing that to my party; in any case, I hadn't heard any alternative.

This time, three years later, I suggested to Bundy that even if he felt compelled to affirm the good intentions of the original decisions, at the very least, if he were to be taken seriously by those who were still carrying on by the same lights, he had to be willing to declare that: "Since it has led to this... I have had to conclude that we were wrong from the start."

McNamara, of course, has never been willing to say any such thing (nor did Bundy<sup>x</sup>; but he did, later, volunteer--the only former official to do so--to appear as an expert witness at my trial, to say that the release of the Pentagon Papers had not harmed national security: which for what it was worth--a lot to me--may have reflected this conversation).

*\* see his book ...*

*noth, McN still lies...*

*(won't talk of VN--*

*except to say-- could have*

*been worse! (in B+W)*

*loyalty to boss?*

*(What he believes are*

*of history. see JTM/DE).*